

Foreign Policy Fake, Arms Control Poseur

Commentary

By Paul C. Warnke

HOW George Bush maintains his campaign pose as a foreign policy and arms control expert is a bafflement. The fact is, he's more like the marginal baseball player who has a "cup of coffee" in the major leagues than the Hall of Famer he'd like voters to think he is. For example, he fails to understand the limited role of nuclear weapons in national defense. In a speech last June, Mr. Bush criticized the emphasis placed by Gov. Michael S. Dukakis on improving American conventional forces. He asked "Is he proposing the winnability of a conventional war and ... what's going to happen in defense of the United States?" Is Mr. Bush still proposing the "winnability" of a nuclear war? During his 1980 Presidential campaign, he said he believed that there could in fact be a winner in a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union. His infatuation with nuclear weapons and a nuclear war-fighting capability is reflected in his Noah's Ark defense strategy. He supports two of every strategic system: two new intercontinental ballistic missiles (the MX and the Midgetman), two new strategic bombers (the B-1 and the Stealth), two kinds of space weapons (the Star Wars antimissile shield and an anti-satellite system). He has said repeatedly that he would go slow on an arms agreement that would drastically reduce intercontinental-range strategic weaponry and that he would tie strategic arms talks more closely to conventional arms control negotiations. In contrast, the Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, and Adm. William J. Crowe Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, have opposed such linkage.

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Mr. Bush has also charged that Governor Dukakis "is anti-nuclear weapons" and would try "to keep the peace through conventional determinants alone." It is clear that he shares neither President Reagan's enthusiasm for deep cuts in strategic weapons nor the laudable, if unrealistic, goal the President set at Reykjavik to eliminate missiles entirely.

Over all, the Vice President exhibits little familiarity with strategic nuclear issues. During the Iowa caucuses, he referred to the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces first as reducing launchers and then as reducing nuclear warheads. In fact, the treaty's provisions apply only to missiles.

On the Strategic Defense Initiative, Mr. Bush told The New York Times: "I am not at the point where I am prepared to say, go forward this minute with partial deployment." But he has also said: "Already, the first phase of

a space-based technology is ready to come out of the lab and begin demonstration." He predicts that, in a first term, "I will be able to single out a technology that will be the answer." His optimism is without informed scientific support.

And in asserting that proceeding with S.D.I. testing and deployment "will not foul up progress on other arms talks either," he forgets two things. First, that it was concerns about a possible Soviet strategic defense deployment that prompted the Nixon Administration to negotiate limits on both strategic defensive and offensive systems. Second, that former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger warned President Reagan in 1985 that Soviet deployment of a space-based defense would mean that we would have to add to our stockpiles of warheads and increase our ability to penetrate Soviet defenses. Obviously, deployment of a territorial defense would derail talks on major arms reductions.

Mr. Bush's record in foreign policy

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times A35
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____

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is no more reassuring. He displays no credentials to take over from President Reagan in dealing with Mikhail S. Gorbachev. His response to the opportunities now open is to deny that Mr. Gorbachev's Soviet Union is less threatening or that it shows "that kind of fundamental change, a turning inward, à la China."

In his year as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Mr. Bush ignored evidence that Gen. Manuel Noriega was dealing in drugs and bribing American servicemen to obtain information about American intelligence operations in Panama. In his almost equally brief time as ambassador to the United Nations, he apparently never realized that the real work of that body does not take place in the General Assembly and that U.N. peacekeeping forces can make it unnecessary to send American troops to hot spots around the world.

His time in Beijing as Chief United States Liaison Officer in 1974 and 1975 seems not to have produced any profound insights about relations with China. He continues to deny that arms were traded to Iran in return for hostages and remains reticent about his knowledge of the use of the proceeds to finance the Nicaraguan contras. The embarrassing naïveté of his toast commending Ferdinand Marcos's devotion to democratic principles is a chilling harbinger of his approach to the developing world.

Finally, as C.I.A. Director, George Bush was responsible for bringing in

"Team B" in 1976 to second-guess the professionals responsible for intelligence estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions. Team B was described by The New York Times as "a hand-picked unofficial panel of hard-line critics of recent arms control policy." Ray Cline, a former Deputy Director of the C.I.A. who was described by The Washington Post as a "leading skeptic about Soviet intentions," said that the national security estimating process "has been subverted" and that Team B was "a kangaroo court of outside critics, all picked from one point of view."

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George Bush accepted Team B's findings of a Soviet military buildup much greater than previously estimated and then said that he had done so because of new evidence. This new evidence consisted of a separate revised estimate of Soviet defense spending, published in October 1976.

What this report showed was not a greater buildup than earlier estimates but only a greater expenditure to acquire the same forces. In the words of the report: "It also implies that Soviet defense industries are far less efficient than formerly believed." But Team B's misleading caricature of Soviet forces led to the misapplication of much of the \$2 trillion spent on defense since 1980.

In evaluating Mr. Bush's claims of a superior ability to deal with foreign affairs and defense issues, it is not enough to look at his résumé. Voters should also look at his record. □